

Nation

First Steps

Fresh Eyes on Waskaganish

Cree Arm-wrestling

Montreal Auto Show

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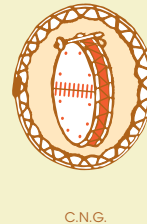
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 Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
 Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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 Cree Nation Government
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PUBLIC CONSULTATION NOTICE

ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS SELF-GOVERNANCE IN EYYOU ISTCHEE THE GOVERNANCE AGREEMENT AND CREE CONSTITUTION

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR EYYOU ISTCHEE?

To learn more about this, consultations with Cree beneficiaries, Cree First Nations and other Cree stakeholders will take place early in 2017. The GCC(EI)/CNG invites you to participate in this important conversation:

January 10, 2017

Waswanipi, Community Complex (Evening)

January 12, 2017

Washaw-Sibi, Hotel Amosphere in Amos (1:30 PM)

January 30, 2017

Nemaska, Sports Complex (Evening)

January 31, 2017

Waskaganish, Gathering Place (Evening)

February 1, 2017

Mistissini, Sports Complex (Evening)

February 7, 2017

Chisasibi, Mitchuap (Evening)

February 8, 2017

Eastmain, Complex Gym (Afternoon)

February 9, 2017

Wemindji, Community Hall (Evening)

February 10, 2017

Whapmagoostui, Whapmagoostui Sports Complex (5:00 PM)

February 21, 2017

MoCreebec, Ecolodge (6:30 PM)

March 8, 2017

Ouje-Bougoumou, Youth Center (Afternoon)

The Governance Agreement and Cree Constitution will strengthen Cree self-government on Category IA lands in the context of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA). They will provide us with greater autonomy and flexibility in governance within our communities and provide long-term security and predictability while allowing us to retain the same local and regional government powers, functions, and responsibilities.

For information, please contact:

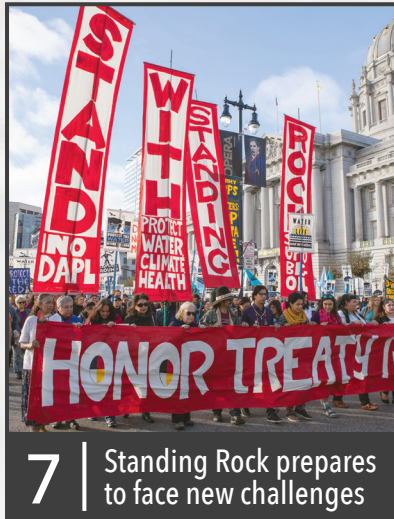
Lillian Loon, Executive Assistant to Executive Director

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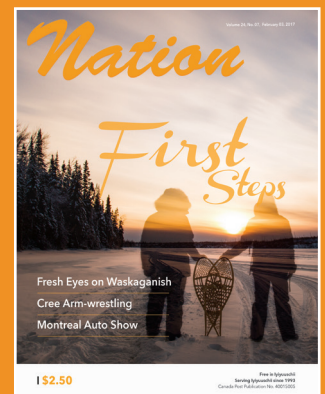
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Spirit Walkers
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Brendan Forward

Signs of things to come

by Will Nicholls



Newly elected US President Donald Trump has a dream: to “make America great again.” It’s a far cry from anything Martin Luther King Jr. would have endorsed when he had a dream for America. Trump’s first days in the Oval Office have given new meaning to the Chinese curse that we should live in interesting times.

One of his first acts was to attack women’s rights. His Mexico City Policy (also known as the “Global Gag Rule”) resurrected the George W. Bush administration’s ban on providing federal money to international groups that perform abortions, or provide abortion information, to all organizations receiving US global health assistance.

Any international organization that accesses US funds for health programs will be required to certify that it does not provide abortion services, counseling, referrals, information or advocate for the liberalization of abortion laws, even with non-US funds. If they don’t, their funding will be cut off. Programs funded by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support child nutrition and help combat infec-

tious diseases like tuberculosis and malaria may also be affected.

Next up is the wall Trump wants to build on the Mexican border. He’s given the green light even though Mexico has refused to fund construction of the wall, as Trump has demanded.

While federal taxpayers are paying for a wall, they will stop funding sanctuary cities and states that opt out of reporting undocumented immigrants. Instead, Trump ordered the Department of Homeland Security to fund new detention facilities. He also ended the “catch and release” policy under which some immigrants are released from detention while they await a hearing with an immigration judge.

Building detention camps to house a specific race or people has a bad history as any of the Jewish, Japanese or Amerindian people can tell you. I wonder if the detention camps will be built along the border to take advantage of the free labour.

While Trump did not include an outright ban on Muslims there are disturbing indications. White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer hinted there

could be action on “keeping America safe” when asked about the so-called Muslim registry that Trump promised during the campaign.

Freedom of information for the American public is following an Orwellian model. Trump’s administration is mandating that any studies or data from scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency undergo review by political appointees before they can be released to the public. So far, most appointees are from the oil industry.

The review also extends to content on the EPA’s website, including data and scientific evidence that show the Earth’s climate is warming and man-made carbon emissions are to blame. Even scientific data collected by agency scientists, such as routine monitoring of air and water pollution, is subject to review. What this means is that science is now in the hands of politicians.

What is clear is that change is coming to America. Whether it will make the US “great again” is another question. Whatever the result, the next four years will certainly be interesting... for all of us.



First steps | Childcare centre Awash Utamet puts culture and community first

by Joshua Grant

Photos provided by CPE Awash Utamet

The Centre de la petite enfance (CPE) Awash Utamet in Chibougamau held its inauguration ceremony January 16, just under a year after receiving its daycare license from the Quebec Ministry of Families. Awash Utamet, meaning first steps, is a joint childcare facility that brings Native and non-Native children together, a dream that took seven years of planning and hard work to realize.

“Twenty years ago I don’t think the community would have been ready to have non-Native families attending a Native organization,” Jo-Ann Toulouse, director general of the Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Centre and Awash Utamet’s secretary treasurer, told *the Nation*.

“We’ve been open for almost a year now. We received our license February 8, 2016. We’re at 611 5e rue, and completely autonomous from the friendship centre.”

Involved in the daycare project from the get-go, Toulouse related the long and arduous process required to secure funding and approval from Quebec to open a childcare centre, and also how rewarding it has been to see things come to fruition.

“We’ve been working on this since 2009,” she said. “Everything that could possibly happen to an organization trying to get on its feet has happened to

us. We changed program directors with the Ministry [of Families] at least six times. One of our early project coordinators, Charles Burgy, had a serious health issue and had to withdraw from the project. We had a [building] site that was pulled out from under us and given to someone else right as we were ready to move forward – just that put us back six months. Then there was the Tomassi scandal a couple years ago, that put us back easily two years.”

Tony Tomassi, former Minister of Families under Premier Jean Charest, was charged with fraud and breach of trust and was accused of, among other things, cronyism in the awarding of contracts for public daycare permits. For Awash Utamet, this prolonged their application process, forcing them to start from scratch with a new minister and new contacts in the ministry.

“As frustrating as it has been, there are so many fabulous people working at the ministry that really know the business side of things inside and out and really care about children,” said Toulouse. “[In the end] they saw what we were aspiring to and helped us to achieve it.”

According to Toulouse, all of this adversity was nothing compared to the incredible technical challenges faced by her and her team.

“Trying to retain our cultural identity while still meeting the criteria of the ministry, sometimes it felt like we were dumbing down what we were trying to do,” she said. “Cultural literacy is very important to the friendship centre and to our community and we don’t want to cut people off from cultural expression.”

“You can’t go faster than the ministry and you can’t go faster than your board of directors,” she added. “We had to discuss and reach a consensus. This is a public, non-profit organization wholly funded by the government and the \$7 a day that the parents pay.”

“The reason why there’s an Aboriginal childcare centre in Chibougamau is because people in the community have been asking for reliable childcare for years. There are 800 Aboriginal people in Chibougamau so the need is there.”

By bringing Native and non-Native childcare under one roof, Awash Utamet was able to secure funding and approval for a 60-place daycare that generates enough revenue for the centre to break even. A 30-place daycare dedicated solely to the Native community would not have been able to support a full-time staff.

Toulouse credited everyone on Awash Utamet’s board of directors for their perseverance in mak-



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ing the childcare centre a reality: President Melissa Rogers, Vice President Julie Tremblay, Administrators Anouk Raphael and Julie Hébert, and Julie Potvin, who came on board as a staff rep once the centre opened. She also mentioned the support of Lucie Bergeron in the early goings and the passion of Awash Utamet's director Line Marcil.

"Once we started hiring, people expressed so much interest," Toulouse exclaimed. "The whole community is saying, 'Can I be your friend?' Non-native families have been saying they want their children growing up learning Cree, knowing their neighbours as their friends and not as an 'other'.

"We know there's a certain amount of racism in any

town, but opportunities like this give us a chance to show just the opposite. It's gratifying and it's humbling to see that in the end the work of the friendship centre and people in the town and the communities is bearing fruit."

One of the key elements of Awash Utamet is making it known that everyone in the community is welcome in the room. In that respect it's a little bit different from what you see in other daycares – families can come and go as they please, and sometimes the kookoms and mooshoms will visit and share stories with the students.

The centre can be reached at 418 748-6161 and also has a Facebook page – CPE Awash Utamet.



"It's gratifying and it's humbling to see that in the end the work of the friendship centre and people in the town and the communities is bearing fruit."

- Jo-Ann Toulouse



Between a rock and a....

The Fight Over Dakota Access Begins Anew

by Dan Isaac

Since the December 4 decision by the former Obama administration to halt construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) through the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, tensions have eased to a simmer in Cannon Ball, North Dakota. But that calm appears to be over.

Direct actions taken by water protectors January 16-18 at the Backwater Bridge and drill pad where the DAPL is slated to cross the Missouri River resulted in conflicts with police. Rubber bullets and tear gas were used against protestors and close to 40 arrests were made.

These recent actions took place as several bills targeting protestors were discussed in North Dakota's state legislature. One bill seeks to remove liability from drivers who unintentionally strike or kill a person blocking a public roadway. Another makes the use of a face covering illegal.

Critics say these bills are an overreaction at best, and a violation of the US Constitution at worst.

State Democratic leader Senator Joan Heckaman told the Bismarck Tribune, "I would be hesitant about a bill where you can hit a person and not be charged. I don't think anybody in North Dakota would be excited about that bill."

On December 20, the Standing Rock Sioux tribal council voted unanimously to ask the water protectors at the Oceti Sakowin Camp to leave.

They did so via an official statement on their Facebook page.

"The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is grateful to all who have stood with us during our efforts to secure a thorough review of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Because we worked together, the Federal Government will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. Moving forward, our ultimate objective is best served by our elected officials, navigating strategically through the administrative and legal processes," read the post.

And while the statement goes on to cite the decision as being guided by concern for protestors and spring flooding, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard disagrees. In a statement posted on Facebook immediately following the council's decision she wrote, "I can't believe the corruption of the tribal council."

Allard, who owns the land on which the Sacred Stone Camp has stood since the beginning of the protest, has stated her camp will remain open despite the council's formal request.

Other organizations that have been fixtures at the camp, like the Indigenous Environmental Network, stated they would respect the council's wishes and vacate the lands. However, the group has resolved to focus on resisting the pipeline through the DeFund DAPL initiative, aimed at getting banks and other financial backers of the project to withdraw support.

The Standing Rock Sioux have given the protestors 30 days to leave the grounds, but it's unclear how the eviction will be enforced. And, given recent developments, whether or not it will take place at all.

Water protectors, who remained at the Oceti Sakowin Camp despite the federal order to seek an alternate route for the pipeline, have done so to insure the new US president would stay true to that promise. With the stroke of a pen, that pledge was broken.

President Donald Trump, who made election promises to push through oil and gas projects, signed a presidential memorandum on January 24. The order resurrected the long dead Keystone XL pipeline and does its part to essentially green-light Dakota Access.

However, the timeline remains unclear, as the Standing Rock Sioux have stated they will fight the order in court. After signing the memorandum Trump ignored questions regarding protestors. The Standing Rock Sioux have yet to make a comment on the status of the Oceti Sakowin Camp since the signing of the memorandum.

While former president Barack Obama stayed on the sidelines of the conflict in North Dakota, Trump has jumped in headfirst and his allegiances are clear. The victory celebrated in December appears to have been merely symbolic and the fight to kill the Dakota Access Pipeline is just getting started.

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Mohawk Girls up for screen awards

Rezolution Pictures' Mohawk Girls has been nominated in three major categories at this year's Canadian Screen Awards (CSA), airing live on CBC March 12.

The APTN comedy series, which has just wrapped up its fourth season, is about how four Mohawk women from Kahnawake get through life, work and romance while maintaining their Mohawk roots.

The show – produced by Tracey Deer, Cynthia Knight, Catherine Bainbridge, Christina Fon, Linda Ludwick and Ernest Webb – is up for three

awards: Best Comedy Series; Best Direction in a Comedy Program or Series (Tracy Deer); and Best Writing in a Comedy Program or Series for the episode "Going Native" (Cynthia Knight).

The smash hit has already garnered several honours over the past four seasons, including a Golden Sheaf Award in the Comedy category at the Yorkton Film Festival, the APTN Award at the Festival Présence Autochtone (Montreal First Peoples' Festival) and a nomination for Best Sitcom at the Banff Rockie Awards.



Rumble is fêted at Sundance Fest

Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World, which highlights the many contributions of Aboriginal recording artists in the music industry, has taken the prestigious Sundance Film Festival by storm. Since the premiere of Rezolution Pictures' latest film on January

23, the documentary has garnered extremely positive reviews in both Variety magazine and The Hollywood Reporter. This marks the first time a Rezolution film has been screened at the prestigious Sundance Festival.

Crees gouged on food prices

On January 24, the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) presented a study to the Cree Nation Government demonstrating that Crees are paying more for less at the grocery stores than do most of the other areas of Quebec, excluding the Arctic.

The project is a collaboration between Deputy Grand Chief Rodney Mark and various members of the CBHSSJB, including Chairperson Bella Petawabano and Dr. Darlene Kitty.

The study looks at the costs of basic nutritious food items that should be in a basket to feed the average Cree family and compared the prices of those items across the province. It reveals that not only does it cost more (on average about \$321.93) to feed a family of four nutritious foods for one week, but that these foods are beyond the reach of lower income families.

For single-parent families with low incomes this means that over

75% of their budget would be spent on basic nutritious foods to maintain the type of diet that would prevent disease later in life, including diabetes and hypertension.

Held in Mistissini, the presentation was a call for action to ensure that Crees have access to the kinds of food they need to become a healthier Cree Nation. However, many of the nutritious food items discussed aren't even available at Eeyou Istchee stores.



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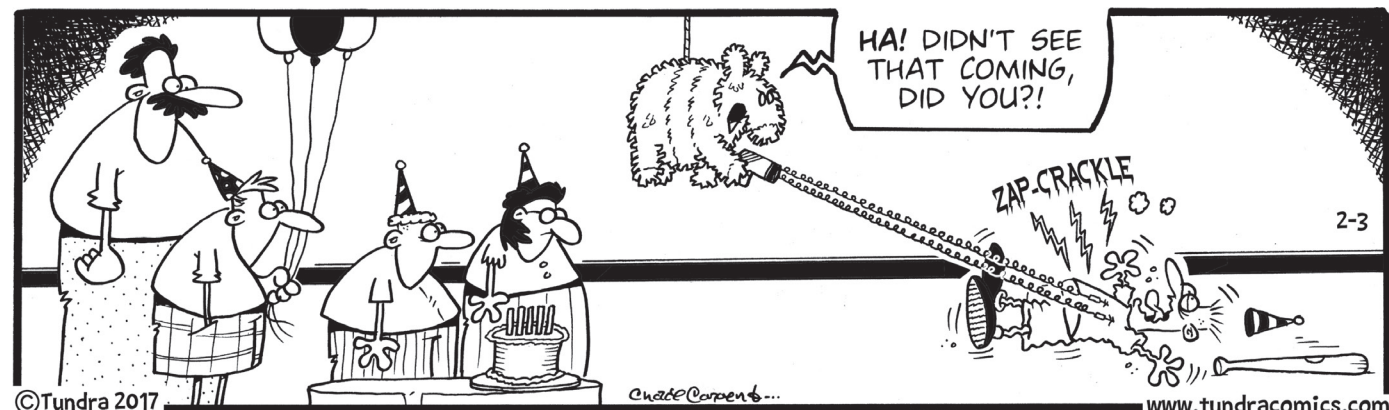
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Story and photos by Dan Coyle

The new arms race

Young Cree arm-wrestlers take their place at the table

- John Bosum (right) posing with his son Casey

*“His gym teacher gave him a friendly challenge, and could do nothing to him. **So now, they call him ‘The Beast’**”*

- John Bosum

The 1987 Sylvester Stallone film, *Over the Top*, tells the story of Lincoln Hawk, a struggling truck driver and father who uses competitive arm-wrestling to rebuild his life and reunite with his young son.

Faced with the daunting task of defeating arm-wrestlers with considerable physical advantages in his quest to claim the championship and prize money that would allow him to achieve his dream, Hawk is the ultimate underdog. And in consummate Stallone fashion he ultimately beats the odds.

While *Over the Top* enjoyed a limited run on big screens across North America, it had a lasting impact on a Cree teenager. Three decades later, John Bosum is one of the Cree Nation’s best known and most successful competitive arm-wrestlers.

Originally from the Chibougamau area, Bosum currently resides in the Montreal borough of LaSalle. He has trained with some of the top arm-wrestlers in the world and participated in events across Canada.

“I always loved the sport. I started training at the age of 12,” explained Bosum in an interview with *the Nation*.

“When I was 14, I had gotten pretty strong. Back then, they had Indian Day in Chibougamau, and there was an [arm-wrestling] event. One of the organizers asked me to enter the men’s category, and I placed second.”

Following that experience, there was no looking back for Bosum, who did his early training with former world champion Ken Taylor of Waskaganish.

“I introduced myself [to Taylor] because I was so eager to learn about arm-wrestling, but I didn’t start to arm-wrestle competitively until I was 25 or 26 years old.”

News traveled fast of Bosum’s training activities with Taylor, who twice won at the North American

Arm-wrestling Championships, and was proclaimed world champion in 1977.

Bosum’s much-anticipated competitive debut would come at the Quebec provincial championships, where he roared onto the arm-wrestling scene with a second-place finish.

It has now been almost eight years since Bosum last stepped up to the table in a major competitive event, taking home second-place honours in the left-hand class and third-place in the right-hand class at the 2009 Mike Gould Classic.

Today, Bosum’s focus is on his young son, Casey, who is following in his father’s footsteps, and quickly making a name for himself in arm-wrestling circles.

“The reason I am still training is because of my son. I started pulling him when he was three years old,” said a clearly proud Bosum.

“Once he got the idea of how to pull, he didn’t stop, and today he is really strong.”

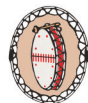
Now 14 years old, Casey has enjoyed success taking on all comers, including the wrestling team at his high school, as well as his gym teacher.

“His gym teacher gave him a friendly challenge, and could do nothing to him. So now, they call him ‘The Beast’,” continued Bosum, who can be found training nightly with Casey at a gym in west-end Montreal.

Bosum looks forward to the upcoming season of arm-wrestling tournaments, including the Quebec provincial championships in May and the 2017 Canadian Arm-wrestling Championships, which kicks off in Halifax June 30.

But the priority for Bosum is to get involved in competitions that welcome youthful competitors like Casey, as well as promoting the sport at the grassroots level, both in Eeyou Istchee and elsewhere.

Casey is no stranger to competition. At the tender age of 10, he placed third in the youth category at the 2013 Mike Gould Classic and finished sixth among 12- to 14-year-olds at last year’s Quebec provincial championships, and expects to take part in this year’s provincial and national tournaments.



Election results of the CNG Board of Compensation and CREECO



The **CNG Board of Compensation** held its elections for the position of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and various committees including the Executive, Audit and **CREECO** Board. Elections are held each two years at the December meeting.

The Chairman term of two years is specified in section 65 of the CNG Act. The election takes place at the **Board of Compensation**, with the 21 members nominating and voting by secret ballot for all positions. In order to be declared Chairman, 50+1% of the vote must be attained.

After elections for Chairman are completed, nominations and elections are held for Vice-Chairman.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are automatically on the Executive and **CREECO** **Board of Directors** in accordance with Section IV of BOC's By-Law 47. Nominations and elections are held to fill the other three positions on the Executive Committee.

Once the Executive Committee is named, the five members are included on the **CREECO** Board of Directors. Nominations and elections are held for the remaining four members on the **CREECO** Board.

Executive Committee

Rusty Cheezo
Randy Bosum
Jack R. Blacksmith
James Bobbish
Derrick Neeposh

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Mr. Rusty Cheezo
Chairman
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Chairman of the CNG Board of Compensation

The CNG Board of Compensation is pleased to announce that **Mr. Rusty Cheezo was elected as the Chairman** of the Board of Compensation. Mr. Cheezo also takes on the position of President for the Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company Inc. (CREECO) by virtue of the election results.

Rusty is well aware of the workings of the Board of Compensation, having sat on the Board in the past, including a term as Chairman from 2004-2006.

In addition to Board of Compensation experience, Rusty brings a wealth of experience to the organization. At the age of 24, he was elected Chief of Eastmain, over the years, he served 9 years as Chief and 12 years as Deputy Chief and also served as a member on various entities including the Cree School Board and the Cree Health Board.

Vice-Chairman of the CNG Board of Compensation

The CNG Board of Compensation is also pleased to announce that Mr. Randy Bosum was elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Compensation. Randy was first elected to the CNG Board of Compensation by the Cree Nation of Ouje-Bougoumou in 2008 and has been a member since. He previously served as Vice-Chairman in 2012-2014.

Randy also brings many years experience in economic development to CREECO, at both local and regional levels. Randy also served as Deputy Chief from 2011-2015 for the Cree Nation of Ouje-Bougoumou.



Mr. Randy Bosum
Vice-Chairman
rbosum@boc-creeco.ca

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the former Executive Members and Board, led by Chairman Jack R. Blacksmith, and Vice-Chairman John Shem. Their contributions were very important to the success of the organization.

Board of Compensation & CREECO

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LEARNING FROM THE LAND

An outsiders visit to a northern community

Story and photos
by Peter Leney

For a southerner, the idea that Arctic waters are within reach of the family car might seem preposterous.

But a paved road does reach James Bay, the southern extension of Hudson Bay, giving adventurous travellers an easy escape into remote wilderness enriched by a chance to mix with tradition-conscious Cree in their communities on the James Bay coast.

Last September, I took the first turnoff from the James Bay highway to Waskaganish at the mouth of the Rupert River. I made a point of coming when something special was going on. In September, this is the Smokey Hill fish camp, a cultural tradition in which families gather near the first rapids up the Rupert River to scoop up, smoke, fry and feast on migrating cisco.

There were also historical images drawing me to Waskaganish, once known as Rupert House. For one, this is where trader/explorer Médard des Groseilliers landed in 1668 on

his mission to assess Hudson Bay as a gateway to rich fur country. He returned to England loaded with furs and the Hudson's Bay Company, Canada's oldest company, was launched.

The Rupert River itself stirs the historical imagination. It was the 19th century route of Cree canoe brigades that carried furs from Mistissini to tidewater at the Rupert House HBC post, and paddled back upstream with winter supplies.

And I felt overdue for contact with the kindness of Cree people and the feeling of calm they project.

To set out fresh on the James Bay highway, I slept in Matagami and left with a full tank of gas. It was 10 to 15 cents a litre cheaper than in Montreal.

At km 6, drivers are greeted with cheerful "Bonjour/Hi" at a combination checkpoint and tourist information centre. It was my last human contact and solitude fully settled in when the Matagami radio station faded after about 30 km. For diversion, I stopped at wide, lonely rivers and read roadside panels explaining local geology and history. I checked out the rustic campground at Ouescapis Lake; it looked overgrown but picnic tables and shelters were like new. In the complete silence, I

A paved road does reach James Bay, the southern extension of Hudson's Bay, giving adventurous travellers an easy escape into remote wilderness



Peter Leney

I felt overdue for contact with the **kindness of Cree people** and the feeling of calm they project

could hear the beating of a raven's wings.

The Waskaganish turnoff comes at km 237. Scenery alternates between black spruce forest and open expanses of swampy ground. The Rupert River flows nearby just to the north, but never comes within view.

Waskaganish visitors must stop at a checkpoint. A friendly attendant with clipboard in hand asked if I had a local contact. I named tourism coordinator Tim

Whiskeychan, who I had spoken to by phone about my visit, and was waved through to the Waskaganish First Nation.

The first view of the community is an institutional landscape with school, police detachment, the gathering place, and an enormous new sports complex.

The road ends at the Kanio-Kashee Lodge, Waskaganish's sole visitor accommodation with 24 rooms and a restaurant. Built

in 1993, the single-storey inn overlooks the Rupert River, giving me my first look at the river. It is wide and calmly flowing here near its mouth, with unspoiled forest on the opposite shore.

The lodge stands at the corner of Cowboy Trail and J.S.C. Watt Street, an intersection honouring an unusual Cree family name and 1930s HBC manager James Watt who, with his wife Maud and local trappers, reversed an impending local extinction of

beavers by operating beaver reserves.

After settling in, I crossed Watt Street to a white house that looked welcoming to curious visitors. It was the Heritage Cultural Centre and I found Stacy Bear with friends making bannock in a large frying pan. She knew about archeological digs at the fort built by des Groseilliers and loaned me a report on the latest effort in 2014.

Written by archeologist Christian Roy, it calls Charles Fort an "archeological and historic site of national significance" as the earliest trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company. The dig site is just east of the lodge, although its location is not marked.

Farther on, a white Anglican church strikes a proud pose from afar but a closer look reveals peeling paint and apparent abandonment. The adjacent cemetery is absorbing for

its variety of Cree family names. Diamonds stand out, including the revered former Grand Chief Billy Diamond, who led the fight to protect Cree rights within the James Bay power development.

Tim Whiskeychan appeared in his pickup truck to take me around. An artist as well as tourism official, he first showed me his art studio where pride of place is held by his design chosen to adorn a Canadian silver

\$5 coin – a crouching hunter aiming at flying geese.

He also demonstrated his technique for creating colourful works by splashing paint-soaked goose feathers on paper, then adding a kaleidoscope effect using his iPhone.

We parted after setting a breakfast date, and curiosity led me into a log building housing the Cree Trappers Association. It looked like another welcoming building



Jacob Weistche and Tim Whiskeychan



I walked along grassy slopes overlooking the Rupert River.

A heritage waterfront protected from development, its main attraction at dusk was an entrancing view of cloud-streaked sunsets over the river mouth and Rupert Bay to the west.

where a stranger could wander in and ask questions.

Trapper David Erless sat down with me to chat about how families spent the winter away on their trapping territories in the old days. These days, low fur prices have undermined fur trapping. And children now spend winter at school, not on traplines.

Leaving Erless, I walked along grassy slopes overlooking the Rupert River. A heritage waterfront protect-

ed from development, its main attraction at dusk was an entrancing view of cloud-streaked sunsets over the river mouth and Rupert Bay to the west.

Next morning, Tim and I met in the lodge restaurant. A sociable community gathering spot, it is a bright space with good food and a river view.

Tim mentioned some incubating ideas for giving tourists something to do when visiting Waskaganish.

One involves boat excursions to other Cree coastal communities or out to historically interesting Charlton Island. But insurance regulations are a hindrance.

In a later email, he wrote that a committee is "in the works" to plan for the 350th anniversary of Waskaganish in 2018, as dated from the 1668 erection of Charles Fort.

What we did put into practice that day was the idea of introducing visitors to

local people who can convey aspects of Cree culture. And we would experience cultural tradition as embodied in the Smokey Hill fish camp.

Our first stop was the school. Tim pointed out his class graduation picture on a hallway wall. It drew my attention to a startling gender imbalance in class photos year after year – girls vastly outnumber boys.

The school gives Cree culture classes to boys and girls separately. I met Ricky

Jolly, who teaches boys traditional skills such as carving canoe paddles, scraping moose hides and repairing rawhide snowshoes. Other items in his classroom include catfish skin rattles, tamarack goose decoys, marten penis needles, games made from caribou bones and wooden shovels with small scoops used to clear snow from traps.

Along with teaching production skills, Ricky stresses the importance of preserving

Cree vocabulary surrounding these activities.

The tour ended on a sad note as Ricky lamented that the culture he teaches is dying and that he does not have time to get out on the land. His father recently removed his last traps, marking the end of an era. "He was the last of the breed of unschooled hunter-trappers," Ricky said.

Tim then led me down the school's labyrinthine halls to meet Pearl Weistche, an

education consultant with the Cree School Board. An old residential school newspaper lay on her desk and I spotted a girl's essay that seemed cheerful in contrast with the grim image of residential schools. Pearl said that some schools were less horrible, such as the ones at Chisasibi and Moose Factory.

She never went to a residential school. "My father hid me in the bush," she said. He attended briefly before



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leaving due to illness, and, "Yes, you were punished for speaking Cree."

Leaving the school, we picked up Tim's friend Jacob Weitsche for the 20-km drive to the fish camp, stopping first at the Rupert River rapids. No one was fishing at the time, but Tim pointed out underwater rocks arranged to trap fish that are then scooped up with a hoop.

The rapids were turbulent despite the reduced water flow resulting from Hydro-Québec's partial diversion of the Rupert River to drive turbines elsewhere.

Jacob knew wild berries and introduced me to edible small white berries as we walked a short trail to a lookout. Creeping snowberries, Tim said. Since I grew up conditioned to avoid wild berries as poisonous, it was special to find this treat hiding under a veil of ground-clinging foliage.

At the lookout, Jacob asked to borrow my binoculars. He had spotted a bald eagle perched motionless on a distant treetop.

We then drove to the fish camp, taking what locals call the gravel pit road at km 22 of the Waskaganish access road. Those directions didn't help me the day before as I looked for the camp on my way in. There should be a sign here, Tim said as we turned in.

The fish camp is tucked amid homes and ceremonial buildings beside the river. We started in a smokehouse where fish that were cleaned and opened in butterfly shape were hung on rafters over the smoke of slowly burning poplar. The smoking adds flavour and dries the fish.

We then moved to a bright kitchen/dining room where the smoked fish are gently pan-fried and served to anyone who asks. It comes with a chunk of bannock and a tasty, chewy donut.

I was also promised caviar, which seemed plausible since there would be female fish, but it proved to be a tease. This was really a fried mix of fish liver and intestines (cleaned, Tim noted), onions and flour called shashditchan.

A similar fish camp was operating across the river, reached by a boat waiting to ferry people over. On the other side, I discovered that the fish camp was not about Cree families continuing an old pursuit, but rather a classroom for teaching the traditional activity to 20 young people, according to supervisor Florrie Katapatuk.

As we lingered, I met the tallyman of the hunting territory where we stood. Clarence Cowboy cut a striking figure with his unusual hat and stocky physique. This is where I realized that Cowboy Trail in Waskaganish was

not about cowboys, but rather a family name.

Everyone's attention was caught by the appearance of a grey jay, or whisky jack, the boreal forest bird recently proposed as Canada's "national bird." Smart and bold, they usually eat, or steal, from your hand, but all my coaxing did not attract this one.

Before leaving the camp area, Tim wanted me to meet the community's old-

est resident, 98-year-old Mary Katapatuk. Peaceful, silent and warmly dressed, she was sitting with care-giving relatives. Tim said that, in a recent interview, she attributed her long life to staying active and doing chores, and she loved meeting people.

Back in Waskaganish by late afternoon, I returned the archeology report on the Charles Fort to Stacy Bear at the cultural centre. Artifacts

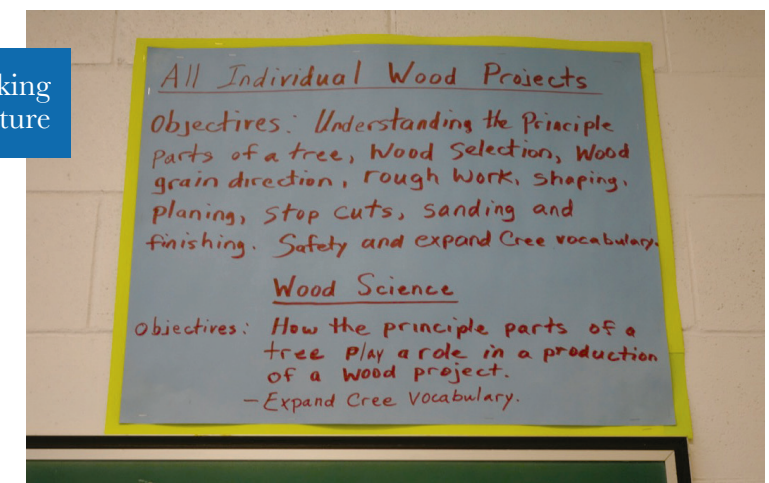
uncovered there, including clay pipes, are displayed at the Cree Cultural Institute in Oujé-Bougoumou, she said.

I left with a gift of a big chunk of bannock and, at dusk, I was back on the grassy riverside slopes absorbed by the view of distant Rupert Bay and another magical sunset.

Peter Leney is a Montreal-based travel writer.

**I left with a gift
of a big chunk
of bannock** and, at dusk, I was back on the grassy riverside slopes absorbed by the view of distant Rupert Bay and another magical sunset.

Ricky Jolly, a teacher working to preserve Cree culture



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CRUISE CONTROL

by Dan Isaac

**Montreal's
annual
Auto Show**
moves the
whole family

In a city known for its long commutes, endless construction and psychotic drivers, you'd think the last thing we needed on our streets is more vehicle traffic. But apparently not, as the 2017 Montreal Auto Show proved when it took over the Palais des congrès de Montréal January 20-29.

The annual show featured 30 manufacturers and 600 cars priced from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars. At the show, 44 cars were on display – some were concept cars, there to gauge public reaction, while others will be available in showrooms this coming year.

The venue, although large, can be fully explored in the span of an afternoon. The show took up three floors, with the middle one being the most exotic, featuring brand names like Ferrari, Lamborghini, Aston Martin and Rolls Royce. Premium cars were sealed off from the

public by velvet ropes. And while I'm more of a Point-A-to-Point-B person (so shortcuts usually get me going more than nice cars), the experience of being in a room filled with five or six cars collectively costing millions of dollars delighted the kid in me. But those who couldn't afford to even

think about buying a Lambo were in luck as Virtual Reality vendors were out in force. My personal highlight was seeing the \$211,425 price tag for a Ferrari that, moments later, I wrecked on a racetrack in an immersive VR experience. And while it's fun to look at \$100,000 cars,



I even met a blind man who confessed, ***"I just love to hear the rev of an engine."***

the more practical options were on the lower floors. Ford, Jeep, Toyota, Honda, Dodge and Subaru led the way for trucks, SUVs and other off-road options. The bottom floor was for people who wanted a more hands-on experience. Spectators could look, touch and check under the hood.

While there were plenty of salespeople, cars are rarely sold at these events. "People usually take the info they've received at the show and then go and do a transaction at the dealer," said Isabelle Fafard, media relations for the Auto Show. In 2016, the show attracted nearly 200,000 visitors. This year's turn-

out was similar in size. As I walked around, I realized the crowd was diverse in age. The youngest car enthusiast I saw was only a few months old, there with his parents to get information on mini-vans and covet sports cars. A father and daughter were looking for the young lady's first new car. "Safety" was the dad's biggest concern. I even met a blind man who confessed, "I just love to hear the rev of an engine." As I neared the end of the circuit, a horde of kids ran through the Jeep show area like a hurricane, climbing through the cabs, jumping on the hoods and screaming, "Let's get this one! ... No, this one!"

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Alternative reality

by Sonny Orr

Recently, Donald Trump's Skewed Information Team (SKIT, for short) coined a term that instantly reverberated around the world. They proclaimed the crowd at his January 20 inauguration ceremony to be far larger than any presidential inauguration in history. Was this some sort of mathematical magic by the same company that manufactures ballot-counting machines? Could it be that the press photos photoshopped out all the protesters? Who knows – but one thing is for sure, alternative facts tell us otherwise.



Perhaps this is signalling the ultimate alternative: yes, the Trump universe alternative. In this world, everything can be signed away with a flamboyant flick of the pen. Wham, another executive order is passed on to a hungry corporate world, eager for all developments and economic tidbits the Great Donald tosses their way, like famished street dogs of Wall Street.

Even North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is quaking in his boots, as he

discovers that he is an illegal immigrant and will be immediately removed from American soil, not that he ever stepped foot on it. Russian President Vladimir Putin is a huge fan of the Donald, knowing that the Trump practically married into Russia and they are now most likely related by marriage. I guess no need for a wall to keep the Russians out as Alaska will probably be sold back to the Motherland.

Anyways, Trump aside, the news I've been hearing lately is on how to keep yourself from going bonkers during these long, cold and wet winter months. Soon, in six weeks or so, warm spring winds will bring some relief to the ice storms that seem to make up most of January of this New Year. Speaking of winter, the North Pole had its share of warm weather again, nothing new by now. Ice melts naturally and we only just noticed that the world has been warming up since the last Ice Age. There's nothing we can do about it. That's probably why the Trump nixed all environment bills which will now require his signature to go ahead.

I could go on and on about Trump and the weather but that's just plain old bad news and weather. On the brighter side, videos galore of people slipping on ice and car collisions are just what the fair-weather traveler needs to see.

Aaarrgggh! At least winter will end soon but not what's happening south of the border. Soon, chip implants will be tested on immigrants to keep track of them and then the rest of the population will follow, once it's seen as the easiest way to get in and out of Mexico.



Not that we would need to have one, but think of the inconvenience of losing your passport at that wild resort you went to on a whim. No more personal experiences of getting lost on your honeymoon or losing your way at a bachelor party gone wrong. Just ping your hungover body and voila, the quickest route to the nearest Canadian embassy is outlined by the blood vessels in the palm of your hand. Ahhh... the world of Trump.

Maybe the new rules will be in our favour for owning hunting guns, but I doubt that a gun registry is anywhere near the Trump agenda. The world is crazy enough without gun-toting right-wingers ruling the world, but I digress, as long as the world of Trump stays in the south where it belongs.

As far as our present reality is, we are growing like no other First Nation on the planet, and soon we too will need to think of using our resources wisely. Perhaps a miniature Trump Tower in every community?

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Under the Northern Sky Neemis (my sister) Jackie

by Xavier Kataquapit



I don't get the chance to visit with my family often these days. We all live far apart and lead busy lives. We talk on the phone but it is not the same as being able to sit with them and chat. The strange thing is, no matter how much time has slipped between us, whenever I get together with them in person, I feel like we were never really apart from one another. I speak to them in our familiar Cree language, which we grew up with as children. When I hear the words, phrases and funny things we say to one another, I am reminded of our parents, the world we grew up in and the people who surrounded us.

I had a short visit with my eldest sister Jackie and her husband Clarence Shisheesh this past week. It was her birthday recently so it was good to spend time with her. I enjoy being around Clarence as he is more like a brother I grew up with in my large family. They married in 1987 when I was 11 and they always remind me of how bad they felt that I had to suffer through chicken pox during the wedding ceremonies that summer.

Jackie is more like an aunt or a mother to me than my sister. She was a big part of my life as a boy. She looked after me and my younger brothers Joseph and Paul, as she was several years older than us. As a teenager, she was tasked with taking care of us youngsters. I can remember spending weekend afternoons with my younger brothers playing in the living room, while Jackie tuned into a Saturday afternoon music program that featured the latest music videos. She would dance around to the latest '80s pop tunes to entertain us as she did her housework for mom, who was working as a cook at the hospital. Dad was out on the land or working with my older brothers Lawrence, Mario,

Anthony and Philip. Jackie was always exciting, fun, energetic and ready to have a laugh.

I can't quite believe she is now a grandmother with 10 grandchildren. She is a dedicated caregiver who still has plenty of fun with her group of babies.

She and my sister Janie were part of a new generation of people in our community that had a firm grasp of our old traditional Cree culture and an eagerness to be part of a new modern world. They were capable of working in modern jobs in office settings or health care due to their education and good English and Cree language skills. At the same time they were ready and willing to work at home to help our mom Susan with traditional activities like preparing wild food, gathering resources or making traditional crafts.

Jackie and Janie had the benefit of being the last generation that mixed with a special group of Elders in Attawapiskat while also participating in modern society. They got to learn from the older traditional Elders back then who had spent more time on the land than in the community. When I look back on it now, there was a relatively short period in our community when our old traditional Elders were mixed with a new generation of young people who were becoming part of a new world. Jackie and Janie were part of a fortunate group of community members who lived and conversed with those Elders during the fading years of their lives. When my sisters were teenagers, I can remember them having plenty of fun and laughter with those old people. By the time I became a teenager myself, those traditional Elders were becoming weaker and it didn't take much time before many of them were gone.

Whenever I speak to my sisters now, I feel as if my Cree language is lacking even though I understand most of everything they say. They have a greater vocabulary and knowledge of the language than I do. I can hear the language of our distant Elders in the way they speak and I enjoy laughing at the twists and turns they make with the words and phrases.

In many ways Jackie is the product of the teachings and training provided by the Elders of their time. I can hear it in her words, see it in her kindness and laugh with it in her humour. I feel happy for her growing family as she is passing on that same knowledge to her children and grandchildren.

I've always thought of my sister as the greatest caregiver anyone could have. I remember one summer evening in our home as the sun was setting at one end of our gravel road. She was keeping an eye out for her friends as she leaned out a window ledge facing the street. I wanted to look out too, so she took me up in her arms to show me the neighbourhood, which was lit up in fading shades of yellow and orange. She said she was waiting for her girlfriends and told me they would be coming up the road soon. I recall feeling protected and cared for and it felt good. Happy Birthday, Neemis (my sister) Jackie!

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